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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 83
By Person

A RESOLUTION to congratulate the Honorable George E. Blancett upon being inducted into the Memphis Park Commission's Amateur Sports Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those citizens who, through their natural talents and unflagging commitment to excellence, bring honor to the state of Tennessee and serve as fine examples of the quality of this state's populace; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable George E. Blancett is one such noteworthy citizen who has attained the highest level of success in all of his endeavors; the Memphis Park Commission recently recognized his substantial accomplishments in the field of athletics by inducting him into their Amateur Sports Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Blancett has been involved in amateur athletics in Memphis since his early childhood; he was born in 1934 to Charles Robert and Clara Godwin Blancett in Memphis and grew up in Lauderdale Courts, one of Memphis's first public housing developments; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Blancett developed his athletic skills at Brinkley Park, which was only two blocks from Lauderdale Courts; it was at this park that he came under the tutelage of Ms. Buck, who became an important mentor to the young George; and

WHEREAS, standing less than five feet tall, Ms. Buck and her many assistants, including renowned actor and director George Touliatos, taught the skills of competition and the art of sportsmanship to George and other youths; these early lessons were instrumental in preparing Mr. Blancett to achieve success in athletics and in every chosen endeavor; and

WHEREAS, George E. Blancett displayed an early glimpse of his immense natural talent when he stepped into a boxing ring at the age of twelve; he applied the lessons he had learned at Brinkley Park to his new sport and reached the pinnacle of Memphis amateur boxing by winning the finals of the North Memphis Golden Gloves in 1951; and

WHEREAS, the young champion was named Outstanding Novice Boxer for his accomplishments in Golden Gloves competition and proceeded to win the Mid-South Novice Championship in that same year; during his outstanding boxing career, George competed throughout the tri-state area and compiled an impressive record which included only a single loss; and

WHEREAS, the possessor of rare speed, George E. Blancett participated in the summertime citywide running competitions that were organized by the park system; he honed his running ability at these meets, many of which were held at Overton Park, where George's great-uncle George Edward Hovey's name is inscribed on the Doughboy Statue plaque as one of the many Memphians who lost their lives in World War I; and

WHEREAS, George developed and improved his God-given speed and, during the 1952 and 1953 track seasons, joined his Humes High School teammates in twice breaking existing records and setting a new record while winning the state championship in 1953; the swift unit collected six gold medals at regional meets; and

WHEREAS, although he had only one year of experience in organized football when he entered high school, Blancett's mental toughness and tremendous speed made him a natural prospect for success on the gridiron; as he began his sophomore year of high school, George's older brother Bobby encouraged him to try out for the Humes High varsity football team; and

WHEREAS, Coach Malcolm Phillips immediately recognized the physical gifts of the younger Blancett and gave him a try-out at running back during one of the B-Game scrimmages; George's effortless rushing ability made a considerable impression on Coach Phillips, and he recommended that Head Coach Rube Boyce try the new player in the impending game against the undefeated, unscored-upon Golden Bears of Jackson; and

WHEREAS, George E. Blancett burst onto the Memphis football scene during the Jackson game; with under a minute remaining in the game, Humes High took possession of the football at their own twenty-yard line, trailing the Golden Bears by a score of 6-0; and

WHEREAS, faced with the overwhelming task of covering eighty yards against the formidable Jackson defense in the few remaining seconds, Coach Boyce sent the untested Blancett into the game to run a pass route from the right halfback position on a play called "Flood Right"; as George ran the designed route, he caught a glimpse of open field to his left and broke off his route to take advantage of the seam in the Golden Bears' pass coverage; and

WHEREAS, quarterback Bobby Blancett, having grown up on the Memphis playgrounds with George, anticipated this improvisation, and his pass hit his younger brother in full stride at midfield and enabled him to speed untouched to the end zone for a touchdown; and

WHEREAS, accompanied by an extra point, the spectacular play gave Humes High the victory and inspired Coach Boyce to incorporate the unplanned play, now termed "Flood Right, Blancett Way" into his playbook; the city of Memphis was abuzz about George and Bobby as the headlines on the sports pages read, "Blancett Brothers Star!"; and

WHEREAS, although he was named Honorable Mention on the All-Memphis Team that season, the most memorable aspect for George about the 1951 football season was having had

the opportunity to play alongside his brother; two years older than George, Bobby provided positive leadership in all sports, as he set an example of athletic success by winning the Memphis City Schools' prep boxing championship as a seventh grader, receiving honors for his basketball accomplishments, and earning recognition as a member of the First Team All-Memphis football squad during the one season that the brothers played together; and

WHEREAS, surrounded by talented athletes and excellent coaches, George starred during the 1952 gridiron season and was named Outstanding Player of the Week by the Quarterback Club of Memphis for his four-touchdown performance against Messick High School; he concluded the year as the second highest scoring player in the area, was selected to the Coaches', *Commercial Appeal*, and *Press Scimitar* All-Memphis Teams, and earned the recognition of Honorable Mention for the All-State team; and

WHEREAS, apparently destined for greatness in his senior season, George Blancett did not expect to play in the season's opening game because of a nagging injury; when asked to play, he answered the call and ran for an eighty-yard touchdown on just his second carry of the year; and

WHEREAS, on his third carry of the game, tragedy struck as a blow to George's leg caused a tear of the cartilage in his knee; he missed the rest of the season while rehabilitating the knee following an October surgery; and

WHEREAS, George Blancett's talent was so great that Mississippi Southern College offered him a full football scholarship despite the injury; after considerable thought and deliberation, George decided to decline the grant and submit to the military draft; he entered the United States Army on June 10, 1954; and

WHEREAS, on the sixteenth day of August in that same year, George Blancett joined the beautiful Marcelle Benefield in holy matrimony at the Decatur Street Christian Church; they had been dating since the summer of 1952, when they had their first date at the Rialto Theater only a couple of days after they had met; and

WHEREAS, at the conclusion of the date, while saying goodbye on the Benefield front porch, George asked Marcelle to be his “steady girlfriend”; she accepted and has remained by his side since that evening; they were named “Mr. and Miss Humes” in 1954 and, later that summer, embarked upon a marriage that has thrived and endured for nearly a half century; and

WHEREAS, after the wedding, George E. Blancett completed his basic training at Camp Chaffee in Fort Smith, Arkansas and took his place among the laudable citizen soldiers who serve to protect and ensure the freedom of the people of this great nation; Private Blancett traveled to Germany, where he was assigned to the 26th Regiment of the First Infantry Division, “Big Red One”, at Bamberg; and

WHEREAS, after being joined by his wife in July of 1955, Mr. Blancett transferred to the 2nd Armored Division, stationed at Oppenheim, Germany; he remained there until March 1956, when he returned stateside from his duty post to receive an honorable discharge; and

WHEREAS, shortly after they returned to Memphis, George and Marcelle Blancett were blessed with their first daughter, Teresa, and one of three wonderful children; in the fall of 1956, Mr. Blancett decided to pursue higher education and enrolled in night classes at Memphis State College under the G.I. Bill of veteran benefits; and

WHEREAS, a talented student, Mr. Blancett and his wife made the decision in 1962 that he should pursue his studies through the completion of a law degree; he finished his undergraduate degree at Memphis State University, receiving a bachelor’s in business administration in the spring of 1963; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, George E. Blancett graduated from Memphis State University as a member of the law school’s second full class; having been a member of Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity as an undergraduate, Mr. Blancett remained actively engaged in the academic community of the university by serving as president of Phi Delta legal fraternity and, during his final year of study, as president of the Student Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, while studying law, Mr. Blancett became a charter member of the local inn of Phi Delta Phi, which limits its membership to those who have achieved academic excellence; he was influential in acquiring the permission of the Adlai Stevenson family to name the charter the Stevenson Inn in honor of this great American politician; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating law school, George E. Blancett commenced a long and distinguished career in law; he began his career by joining the general law practice of Roscoe Feild and George Collier, and he later formed a partnership in 1973 with longtime friend John P. Colton, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Wyeth Chandler appointed Mr. Blancett as Judge of the City Court of Memphis in 1974 to complete the term of Judge Bernie Weinman; Judge Blancett elected not to seek election for a full term and returned to his private practice in 1975; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, Judge Kenneth A. Turner appointed Mr. Blancett as a judicial referee in the Memphis and Shelby County Juvenile Court; he continues to serve with acumen and alacrity as Chief Referee of the six-referee panel; and

WHEREAS, while achieving enormous success in his profession and all his endeavors, George E. Blancett has never forgotten the experiences and the people who encouraged and assisted him along the path to his present exalted position; remembering the influence of Ms. Buck, his older brother Bobby, Coach Boyce, and many other role models, Mr. Blancett has devoted much of his time and other resources to promoting athletics as a viable method of positively influencing the youth of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, in the 1970s, George and Marcelle Blancett assembled a group of Memphians to begin a program of open track and field meets that would provide opportunities much like those that the young George Blancett had enjoyed as a youth; the meets soon became immensely popular and attracted crowds of up to 200 participants, including athletes ranging from under ten years of age to senior citizens; the participants came from every socio-economic and social background; and

WHEREAS, held on the Memphis Park Commission's Hodges Field cinder track during the summer months, the meets moved to the commission's indoor track at the Fairgrounds for two winters; the largest meet was held at Halle Stadium, where track and field legend Ralph Boston appeared as guest of honor to present medals and ribbons; and

WHEREAS, George and Marcelle Blancett also organized the first qualifying meet ever held in Memphis for the Junior Olympic track and field competition; their efforts rewarded the young people of Memphis with an opportunity to display their talents on a national stage; and

WHEREAS, a devoted husband and father, George E. Blancett assigns much of the credit for his success to the efforts of his devoted wife; Marcelle Blancett was a pillar of support while they were stationed in Europe during his military service, she worked full-time at Memphis State University while he pursued his academic studies at Memphis State University, and she raised their three wonderful children, Teresa, Cary, and Jeanice with a healthy mixture of love, guidance, and discipline; and

WHEREAS, committed to family values of the highest order, Mr. Blancett is also the proud and loving grandfather of five grandsons, Lester and Logan Graves and Jordan, Jonathan, and Jackson Blancett; and

WHEREAS, a devout Christian, Mr. Blancett is an active member of Lindenwood Christian Church; while chairman of the Church's community service department, he oversaw the furnishing of an emergency home designed to help families in crisis to begin anew; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Blancett has also displayed his deep concern for those in need as architect of Lindenwood Christian Church's Room at the Inn, a program that offered lodging to chronically homeless men during the coldest months of the year; the Church offered to those unfortunate souls a warm place of shelter on nights when the temperature fell below the freezing point; and

WHEREAS, for his laudable efforts on behalf of the disadvantaged and his exemplary outreach work with his church, Mr. Blancett was honored by President George Bush as one of

"A Thousand Points of Light"; President Bush established the Points of Light Initiative to recognize worthy individuals and organizations involved in community service whose meritorious example meritoriously served to encourage others to "connect through service;" and

WHEREAS, George E. Blancett was honored with one of the select Daily Points of Light Awards that was bestowed during George Bush's presidency; and

WHEREAS, possessing estimable accomplishments in all of his undertakings, Mr. Blancett is an excellent example and role model for the people of Tennessee; the person who achieves the highest level of accomplishment, remembers the path to success, and endeavors to prepare the way for those who follow, provides a paradigm that all Tennesseans should strive to emulate; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby commend and honor George E. Blancett for his enshrinement in the Memphis Park Commission's Amateur Sports Hall of Fame in recognition of his substantial legacy as a competitor and benefactor in the athletic community of Memphis, offer our thanks for his meritorious service to the people of this state, and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.